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RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001350

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, EAP/RSP, EAP/PD, OES/PCI, OES/STC (EILEEN KANE)  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE, G/ENV  
STATE PASS TO EPA/OIA (DENNIS CUNNINGHAM AND MARK KASMAN)  
STATE PASS TO EPA/ORD (KEVIN TEICHMAN)  
HHS/OSSI/DSI PASS TO OGHA/HHS (STEIGER/VALDEZ/ABDOO)  
CDC FOR OGHA (BLOUT), NCEH (SINKS), NIOSH (SWEENEY), AND NCBDDD (BOYLE)  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (SHUBERT AND VAN HOUTEN)  
HHS/OSSI/DSI PASS TO FIC/NIH (GLASS) AND NIEHS/NIH  
BANGKOK PASS TO RDMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL SENV TBIO KPAO VM  
SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC DETAILS DIOXIN CLEANUP EFFORTS AT FORMER U.S. AIR BASE

REF: HANOI 1332

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR DISSEMINATION OUTSIDE THE USG OR INTERNET POSTING.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a December 11 meeting with Emboffs, David Jarkulisch, Commercial and Development officer at the Embassy of the Czech Republic, detailed November meetings between Czech technical and development experts and their Government of Vietnam (GVN) counterparts to negotiate dioxin remediation and health projects at or near the former U.S. airbase at Phu Cat. Jarkulisch noted progress, but also discussed some bumps in the road. End Summary.

#### Czech-Vietnamese Phu Cat Remediation Plan

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¶2. (SBU) In November, the Czech Republic sent a mission to Vietnam to agree with the GVN on a scope of activities under the August 2008 agreement with Office 33 (the entity that coordinates GVN Agent Orange/dioxin policy) to remediate Phu Cat airport. Jarkulisch lamented that due to the decline of the Czech koruna against the dollar, the Czech government could only fund USD 2.3 million as opposed to the USD 3 million originally planned - though that number could move back up depending on exchange rate fluctuations. The Czech Republic plans to spend USD 1.5 million from 2009 through 2011 on airport remediation activities and, starting in 2010, provide USD 800,000 for health and social projects for persons affected by dioxin surrounding the airport and in broader areas of Binh Dinh province.

#### Vietnam Focuses on Containment, Not Remediation

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¶3. (SBU) Though the Czech Republic and Vietnam agreed upon a scope of work for surveying and initial remediation at Phu Cat, Jarkulisch noted that the scope of work did not follow the priorities preferred by the Czechs. As in our discussions at the Joint Action Committee (JAC) Technical Group (Reftel), the GVN demanded the project initially focus solely on excavation and passive land filling. Only following completion of this phase would the GVN agree to allow the

Czechs to pilot remediation methods – whether biological or chemical. Additionally, as we had heard from the UNDP, the new Office 33 leadership pressed the Czechs to fund travel and office equipment beyond that needed for actual remediation. According to Jarkulisch, the Czechs refused and also pushed back on seemingly high initial GVN estimates for landfill construction on site. Making work more difficult, the GVN could not produce a detailed surface map or geologic map of the site, instead relying on a satellite image provided by the U.S. Department of Defense. Finally, Jarkulisch lamented the recent departure of long-time interlocutor Dr. Le Ke Son from Office 33. Unlike discussions with the United States, Son no longer plays any role in Czech-Vietnamese cooperation. The Czechs have found it more difficult to work with his replacements.

Remediation Costs Seem Reasonable,  
Actions will Follow EU Standards

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**¶4.** (SBU) At the same time, Jarkulisch noted several positive steps. The GVN agreed that USD 1.5 million would cover the costs of landfill construction, soil excavation, additional sampling of lake sediment surrounding the airport, a workshop for local authorities detailing contamination issues, and the eventual piloting of remediation technologies. About half of the total would go towards constructing and moving soil to the landfill. This number is much lower than initial GVN estimates and seems consistent with the scope of our initial calculations for costs at Danang (Danang costs will be higher due to higher volumes of soil and higher dioxin concentrations). Further, the GVN agreed to allow a Czech company to be present on site throughout the remediation process for quality

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assurance/quality control. All efforts would meet European Union standards. At this point, Jarkulisch was unsure whether the GVN would require the Czechs to use a Ministry of Defense company to excavate the soil and construct the landfill or would allow the Czech government to bid out the project.

U.S. Engagement Leveraged Czech Efforts

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**¶5.** (SBU) Jarkulisch highlighted the importance of continued U.S. involvement in Agent Orange/dioxin and stated that this engagement facilitated approval within the Czech government for this project. We agreed to share information on remediation technologies and strategies. We urged the Czechs to join us to advocate for remediation beyond passive land filling, which likely will not reduce dioxin contamination to acceptable levels. Depending on internal budgetary discussions and Czech perception of continued U.S.-Vietnamese cooperation on this issue, Czech involvement in dioxin remediation may end following completion of the project at Phu Cat in 2011. Should issues arise after that, we know the GVN will again point to the United States for resolution.

MICHALAK